VIDEO THEATRE

Women's Festival At Mercer Arts Center

By LILLIAN AFRICANO

The Kitchen, multi-channel video theater at the Mercer Arts Center, is showcasing a small milestone in the dual areas of communication and equal opportunities for women. Since Sept. 14th the Women's Video Festival, a first of its kind, has been presenting works created, produced or directed by women.

Because it is not an established form, with a tradition of male domination, half-inch experimental video has been an excellent art and information tool, readily accesible to the increasing involvement of women in this time of heightened self-awareness. While the works shown cover a broad range of video applications, from video verite to electronic abstractions, much of the subject matter dealt with the problems of women. Notable examples were documentaries on "Lesbian Mothers" and "Single Women Raising Families," "The Rape Tape," and "The Worst Is Over," an abortion tape.

Festival organizers were not, however, chauvinistic in their thinking, and did allow tapes in which men had participated. One of the highlights, a nice example of video as kinetic art, was "Let It Be," made jointly by Steina and Woody Vasulka. Though this particular tape was a prize winner in the First National Video Festival in Minneapolis, the degree of technical skill and professionality varied drastically, since anyone who had a work to submit could do so.

Co-ordinator Susan Milano and her co-workers Shridhar Bapat, Laura Kassos, Rochelle Steiner, Liz Sweetnam and Vandra Thorburn plan to make this an annual event. They hope in the future to gather work from throughout the country, since most of the works shown this time came from the New York metropolitan area.

The festival will run through September 30th, with favorite tapes to be run again October 5th through 7th. Admission is by contribution, and information as to times is available by calling 475-9865.